



## COVID-19 Safety Guidelines During the Holiday Season

The holiday season is an important time of the year for many and may still be enjoyed if friends and family follow the appropriate precautions. With the onset of flu season and increased rates of community transmission in Maryland and other states, Marylanders are encouraged to follow recommended precautions to keep themselves, their families, friends and communities safe this holiday season.

For more information, please see the [CDC guidance on holiday celebrations](#).

**1. Celebrate with the people in your own immediate household.** Celebrating with immediate family or members of your own household is the safest way to observe the holidays. Attending gatherings with people from many different households poses a higher risk of spreading COVID-19 infection. Instead, spread holiday cheer by sharing family recipes, having a virtual meal together, or sending snacks or beverages. For family and friends who are at higher risk of complications, deliver a special meal.

**2. Don't attend events or social gatherings if you're feeling ill or if you have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.** If you are experiencing any [signs or symptoms](#) of COVID-19, have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the prior 14 days or have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and have not yet been released from isolation, you should avoid traveling and attending or hosting any events or social gatherings.

**3. Understand the COVID-19 precautions for the event or social gathering you are attending.** Larger gatherings may pose a risk of spreading COVID-19, even when recommended precautions are observed. If the event or religious service is in a facility, make sure you understand the facility's COVID-19 requirements under state and local orders and directives. If the event or gathering is at a private home, consider whether people will be socially distanced, if there is adequate ventilation and what guests are told about facial coverings. Remember, outdoor visits with physical distancing are generally safer than indoor visits.

**4. Wear a face covering.** Continue to wear a face covering around people who don't live in your household at all times. While eating or drinking, maintain a distance of six feet or more from people who do not live in your household.

**5. Limit the number of people you come into contact with by avoiding large gatherings or multiple events with different groups of people.** Avoid being in close contact (within six feet, for a total of more than 15 minutes) with people outside your household. If hosting, only invite as many people as your space can allow while maintaining physical distance from one another. Pay special attention to interaction with guests who are at high risk for more serious COVID-19 infection. Older individuals and those with underlying conditions such as obesity, diabetes, cancer or other conditions that affect

immunity are more likely to require hospitalization and have complications. You may want to consider providing other means (like video chats) for them to visit with your family.

**6. Check for local travel advisories and guidelines related to testing and quarantining.** If traveling to or hosting guests from other states, check any applicable travel advisories. [Maryland's travel advisory](#) recommends additional precautions for travel to/from states with a high level of community transmission. If you are traveling, follow [CDC recommendations for travel](#).

**6. If hosting, clean frequently touched surfaces and be sure to follow safe food practices.** Follow all [CDC recommendations for cleaning](#), increase the air circulation in your house by opening windows and doors, provide seating options that are spaced out and limit the number of people who are handling or serving food. Remember, outdoor visits with physical distancing are generally safer than indoor visits.

**7. Wash your hands.** Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water, especially before leaving the house; before preparing, serving or eating food; when entering or exiting social gatherings; and after contact with commonly touched surfaces. Carry hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (and make it available for guests).